

## Susquehannock Trail Club News – 02-09-2023

By Bill Boyd

Here are six great gifts we are all given - for free. All we need to do is step out the door and head for the woods. I'm speaking of the "6 gifts of trees." And here they are in no particular order: #1 - Climate resilience. Trees' food-making process involves absorbing carbon-dioxide from the air and storing it. This helps remove greenhouse gases that cause climate change. #2 - Clean air. Trees are good for our health. They produce oxygen for us to breathe and remove harmful pollution/pollutants from the air. #3 - A boost to your health. Time in nature - like a walk among the trees in a city park or any woodland area, correlates with a drop in anxiety and depression. Trees help both our mental and physical well-being. #4 - Clean water. Trees filter water, making your drinking supply cleaner and more reliable. Trees store and filter more than half of the US water supply. #5 - A home for the wildlife we love. Forests create habitat at ground level, the top of their canopies, and everywhere in between. All these habitats in a single area allow many diverse species to thrive. #6 - Cooler temperatures. Temps are rising and heat waves are getting longer. A neighborhood tree's shade acts like a natural AC and can even help keep down the energy costs of our actual AC systems.

(Note - this first part was mostly excerpted from Nature Conservancy mag.)

The best way to take full advantage of all that trees have to offer, is to take a walk in the woods, of course. It's usually called hiking, although it is simply walking - so don't let the word hiking scare you. There are casual hikers and then there are the hardcore hikers, those who bang out 15-30 miles a day. Most of us belong in the first category, and you need nothing special to get started, except some comfortable shoes and a bottle of water. Some like to spend a small fortune on all of the latest gadgets and gear, which is fine if that is your liking. Hiking sticks are an example - some will probably cost you as much as a good mountain-bike. And yet you can easily whittle a fine staff from a nice straight sapling - I must have a gazillion of them in my woods, if you need one.

So wait for some good weather, dry ground and a little sunshine preferably, and give it a try. If a person can run all 84 miles of the STS in 20-some hours straight through, surely you can enjoy a pleasant mile or two on the trail. Be careful though, it's addicting.